



A newsletter of the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation

FoundationTimes

FALL 2025

Congrats to Community Volunteers

Six outstanding community volunteers were recently honored by the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation (GMFF) at its Great Gatsby themed Ovation event, held on Thursday, September 25, 2025, at Davian's. We recognized the following volunteers: Todd Paulus with the *Lifetime Achievement Award*, Linda Bonnell, Jeannine Matuszak, and Vicki Roehsner with the *Shining Star Award*, Larry Podolske with the *Unsung Hero Award*, and Tom Branta with the *Patriotism Award*. Honorees are selected by the GMFF from nominations submitted by citizens or groups in the greater Menomonee Falls area.

PATRIOTISM AWARD

TOM BRANTA

Janet Hickie, who nominated Tom Branta, described him as "one of the great Menomonee Falls citizens and a true patriot. He has been part of the Menomonee Falls community for 53 years." He has been married for 55 years to his high school sweetheart, Mary Lou, and their children, Jim and Melissa graduated from Menomonee Falls High School.

Tom has been a dynamic leader of the many veteran-sponsored activities in the community for many years. He served in the Army and National Guard for 12 years, including a stint in the 32nd

Military Police Company as a Staff Sergeant Instructor, two years in the 64th Headquarters Co. as their chemical-biological-radiological staff sergeant, and a National Guard Staff Sergeant Recruiter for his final four years.

In 2008, he joined the Henrizi-Schneider American Legion Post #382. He served as the second and first vice commander before assuming the role of commander in 2019. Tom participates in the Menomonee Falls Memorial Day tribute ceremony and parade, visits veterans in assisted care facilities, participates in the Stars and Stripes Ambassador program, and marches in the Independence Day and Christmas Parades. Additionally, Tom has served at over 250 military funeral honors and marched in over 50 parades. He says that helping others is a privilege and an honor.

SHINING STARS

LINDA BONNELL

JEANNINE MATUSZAK

VICKI ROEHSNER

Linda, Jeannine, and Vicki are longtime residents of Menomonee Falls and active community volunteers whom the Falls Area Pantry has nominated for this honor. Jeannine served as interim director of the food pantry. She was joined by Linda and Vicki during the pandemic to quickly adjust operations, ensuring clients continued to receive uninterrupted service. They became a solid team that continues to this day. Specifically, Jeannine is best known for welcoming every client to the food pantry. Linda oversees the home delivery operation, trains volunteers, and serves as the coordinator for her church. Vicki manages the pantry's operations on Tuesdays, coordinates donation pick-up from local grocery stores, and handles many behind-the-scenes projects.

As food pantry executive director Widge Liccione states in her nomination, "Many come here not just

**Charitable
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*Ensure grant
funding for
Menomonee Falls
non-profits for
years to come.*



Tom, left, pictured with family and friends at the end of Ovation.



Jeannine, Linda, and Vicki pose with GMFF Board Chair, Dennis Pollard.

because of the food but also for some love that all three convey, not only personally, but also in the way they train our volunteers and care for them. Over time, we have come to see that they are like the three legs of a stool. Without one of them, we would not be the same vibrant organization."

UNSUNG HERO

LARRY PODOLSKÉ

Terry Fitzsimmons, who nominated Larry Podolske, a 30+ year resident of Menomonee Falls, shared that his volunteerism started with coaching his two children at the YMCA and in Little League. As they grew older, Larry continued to volunteer with the recreation department, booster club, and special projects for the School District of Menomonee Falls.

Best known for his quiet volunteerism, Larry runs the Optimist Club's popcorn wagon, serves on the July 3rd parade committee, and is president of the Menomonee Falls Baseball Group. Nicknamed the "kernel" of the popcorn wagon, Larry oversees its entire operation all season long. Proceeds from the successful popcorn wagon fund the Optimist Club's Friends of Youth programs. Larry has been a member of the Optimists Club for twenty years. Additionally, he has been a part of the Menomonee Falls



Larry and family enjoy the cocktail hour of Ovation.

Baseball Group since 2015. This group oversees the operations of our community's adult baseball team. It funds the high school summer baseball programs by raising money from banner sales at Trenary Field.

Larry described himself as a volunteer who has a hard time stepping down. He credits his parents for being incredible volunteers and passing down their commitment to service.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

TODD PAULUS

Volunteer, hard worker, problem solver, activist, role model, fundraiser, event organizer, board member, teacher, community member, these were some of the roles that nominator Karen Nelson used to describe Todd.



Todd pictured with Molly, GMFF board member, and family.

Todd Paulus' volunteerism has made a significant contribution to the community. For example, his twenty-five years as chairperson for the Optimist Club's Scholarship Golf Outing have resulted in more than \$250,000 for scholarships. He also supported fundraising and activities for Village Park, the high school turf football field, Wisconsin Adaptive Sports Association, Falls Fest, and Junior Achievement. While his volunteering continues, the Foundation is pleased to honor him with this Lifetime "so far" Achievement Award.

When notified that he would be receiving an award, Todd described his multiple attempts to compile a complete list of his activities, explaining, "I do not do volunteer opportunities for recognition or accolades." The volunteer opportunities he has been part of are fun. It does not seem like work.

One quote from Paul Farmer that holds special meaning for Todd is, "That's when I feel most alive—when helping people."

Grants Support Youth and Community Organizations

Twelve area non-profit organizations will receive almost \$35,000 in grant funds from the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation. With 2025 funds, the Greater Menomonee Falls Foundation has awarded over \$330,000 in grants to more than 60 non-profit organizations.



GRANTS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

Several grants support the community as a whole. THE ART GUILD OF MENOMONEE FALLS will utilize funds on an initiative to spotlight the talents of emerging artists and art students in the community. FRIENDS OF OLD FALLS VILLAGE will build an heirloom vegetable garden for educational purposes. MENOMONEE FALLS LIBRARY FRIENDS will invest in a CoLab, a reservable meeting space for individuals or small groups. In addition, WILDLIFE IN NEED grant funding will support its Caring for Wisconsin Wildlife Program. Lastly, the GMFF will continue to pay for its \$50,000 sponsorship of VILLAGE PARK with a \$10,000 grant.



GRANTS SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Three organizations work to increase access to food, nutrition education, and emergency housing. The FALLS AREA COMMUNITY SERVICES FOOD PANTRY will utilize grant funding to purchase fresh produce, eggs,

meat, and dairy items, which are often in short supply at various times throughout the year. With its Healthy for Life Program, the ASSOCIATION FOR THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS WITH HANDICAPS (ARCh) will provide nutrition education for children and adults with disabilities. The 35-bed, 24/7 Emergency Shelter at THE WOMEN'S CENTER assists victims of domestic and sexual violence and their children.



GRANTS SUPPORTING YOUTH

Four organizations work directly to benefit youth programs: the CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY CENTER, MENOMONEE FALLS JUNIOR PHOENIX FOOTBALL, GPS EDUCATION PARTNERS, and COMMUNITY SMILES DENTAL.

Grant funding will offset the cost of indoor gym improvements at the Children's Community Center. Youth football players will benefit from updated tackling equipment to help prevent potential injuries and concussions.

GPS Education Partners will use grant funding to support its Manufacturing Youth Apprenticeship Program at the Bradley Corp. Education Center in Menomonee Falls.

The Community Smiles Dental Healthy Smiles for Tots & Teens program will receive funding for preventive and restorative treatments for children in the Menomonee Falls area.

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Join our Founders Society by making a total contribution of \$10,000 within a 3-year period.

KNOW SOMEONE DESERVING OF AN AWARD?

Help us find the quiet leaders who deserve recognition. Go to fallsfoundation.org and visit our awards page to download a nomination form.

**DONATE
TODAY!**



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